GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5250
ANSWERED ON:30.04.2008
ACHIEVEMENTS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ MINISTRY
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Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has evaluated its performance during the last two years;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government to further improve the functioning of the Ministry on the basis of said evaluation.

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a) and (b): The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has brought out a compilation titled 'The State of Panchayats Report − 2006' on the basis of the information received from the State Governments in November, 2006. This Report was placed on the Table of both Houses of Parliament on 23 November 2006 and Debated in the Lok Sabha in December 2006.

During the year 2007-08, it was felt that an independent evaluation in this regard be got done through an institute of repute. Accordingly, the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) was requested by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to undertake an independent assessment of the State of Panchayats in India. The Compilation of "The State of Panchayats 2007-08: An Independent Assessment" (SoPR 2007-08) marks an important landmark in India's grand democratic experiment. This document demonstrates the Ministry of Panchayati Raj's commitment to bring to the fore the state of democratic principles percolating to the local governance in rural India even as India's socio-economic transformation leads the country in new and promising directions.

With the vision of ushering in a democratic and participatory governance system in the country, the Constitution of India was amended in 1992 to introduce a three level Panchayat system. It was hoped that as institutions of grassroots democracy, Panchayats would contribute to attaining the goals of accelerated growth with social justice. Since these historic amendments, the country has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the number of grassroots democratic institutions. There are now 2,33,606 Gram Panchayats, 6,094 Intermediate Panchayats and 543 District Panchayats. There are close to 26,78,000 elected representatives at the village level, 1,58,000 at intermediate level and 15,600 at district level. A little below 37% of the elected representatives are women and a little over 30% belong to the socio-historically disadvantaged section of society. A number of measures have been taken by the Union and State Governments since 1992 to enable Panchayats to function as empowered institutions fully involving the common citizens in governance process and in turn, in equitably delivering the results of economic growth. The SoPR 2007-08 is an attempt to make an assessment of the achievements of Panchayats and finding ways for their strengthening in future.

The SoPR 2007-08 consists of three volumes. Volume -I presents a critical assessment of the progress of Panchayats as institutions of self-government, and the role played by them in attaining the goals of economic growth and social justice. The Volume is based on thematic essays prepared by independent experts in different fields from all over the country who have attempted assessment of Panchayats on particular themes of importance. This Volume, besides synthesizing findings from a diversity of sources, also identifies mechanisms through which Panchayats can contribute towards the goal of inclusive growth as envisaged in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. Volume -II of the SoPR presents a profile of 25 States and 6 Union Territories with regard to the state of Panchayats. It builds the narratives around two broad themes;'effective devolution' and 'functioning of Panchayats'. The volume has used the 18 dimensional matrix identified for mapping the speedy devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats. Volume- III is a compendium of various policy circulars and documents issued by Central and State governments from time to time in strengthening the Panchayat system in the country.

(c): At the attainment of the "15th Anniversary of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) 1992", the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has convened a National Convention of Presidents of Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis on 22-24 April, 2008 at Burari Ground, North Delhi. The major items discussed in the Convention are viz. Fifteenth Anniversary Charter of Panchayati Raj, devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to Panchayati Raj Institutions(PRIs), training facilities for PRIs, Computer networking of PRIs. 'The Fifteen Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj' was presented to the Prime Minister of India in this convention. A copy is annexed.